DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 224 565 PS 013 228

AUTHOR Hepworth, H. Philip
TITLE Family Policy in Canada: The Case of Mothers' Allowances.
PUB DATE Dec 79
NOTE 28p.; Draft version.
PUB TYPE Viewpoints (120)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Family Programs; *Financial Support; Foreign Countries; *Government Role; *Mothers; Political Issues; Poverty; *Public Policy; Public Support; Social Class; *Social History; Social Problems; Socioeconomic Influences; Welfare Services
IDENTIFIERS *Canada

ABSTRACT

Allowances for mothers in the prairie provinces of Canada originated when long-term trends converged at a time of unprecedented social, economic, and political crisis for the state. One crisis condition, World War I, afforded an opportunity for the proponents of both female emancipation and prohibition to combine and force concessions from the state. Mothers' allowances represent part of the responses made by governments to the pressures of the day. Importantly, some of these concessions were partial or piecemeal. Convenient remedies for a number of problems facing government, these concessions were never intended to solve major social problems. They did not eliminate poverty, though they mitigated some of its worst effects. It can be argued that government reluctance to expand the terms of reference of the allowance program served to perpetuate the Poor Law values of lesser eligibility underlying present-day Canadian social assistance programs. Mothers' allowances thus provide an interesting case study of the implications of family policy. (RH)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED224565

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

X This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official NIE position or policy.

FAMILY POLICY IN CANADA:

THE CASE OF MOTHERS' ALLOWANCES

Draft version only

PS 013228

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

H. Philip Hepworth

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

H. Philip Hepworth
Associate Professor
Faculty of Social Work
University of Regina
December, 1979.

SOME THEORETICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Interest in the concept of family policy has grown in Canada and the United States during the 1970's. North American commentators have cast envious eyes at countries that claim to have family policy. Public officials have responded by claiming that though they do not speak explicitly of family policy, their social policies are in fact supportive of the family.[1] It becomes apparent that family policy is very difficult to define; whether public policy is considered to be supportive of the family depends on what one considers "good" for the family and whether that good corresponds to the State's concept of what is good for the country. It may even be advantageous for the State to leave unclear just what its family policy is.

What is not usually disputed is that government policies of any kind may have a measurable impact on families, whether intended or not. Fluoridation of water, for example, may be an official policy but will not usually be viewed as family policy except by those of the extreme right who attach to fluoridation all kinds of sinister plots to destroy the health and sanity of youth. In fact there is likely to be no lack of policies that have an impact on families. Governments, though, may be reluctant to relate these policies to their impacts, or to each other, either because they are obviously contradictory, or because their precise effects or interrelationships are unknown,[2] or because it would be contrary to the interests of government if the relationships were known.

If governments were to spell out the importance of their policies for families, or the importance of families for their policies, they would be faced with a number of embarrassing choices. They would have to specify the kinds of family they support, and why. Explicit family policies are in other words prescriptive, and so open to attack. It is not surprising therefore if governments prefer some obscurity of purpose. Family, like motherhood, is a reassuring term so long as it does not have to be defined.

There is an assumption that family policy is a Good Thing. In asking whether Canada has or has ever had a family policy, we are concerned not only with the visible or immediate consequences of such a policy, but also with the extent to which government relates its policies to the existing or desired social structure. As a senior bureaucrat has said, "the issues involved in family policy are far

from being purely technical - they cut to the heart of our social structure."[3] What do we mean by 'social structure'? In this case, and in brief, the political and economic forms in Canada today, that is, what we know as capitalist democracy.

Do we know whether governments in Canada have sought to maintain or change the nature of the social structure? If so (and we can hardly think otherwise, since that is the purpose of government) we can examine the values and content of specific policies they follow. In the case of family policies, the classic questions apply - whom do policies benefit and whom do they not benefit? A central question, in our view, is how family policies contribute to the maintenance or the modification of the class structure.

Use of the term 'family' does not automatically make a social policy a family policy. Thus family allowances could just as usefully be called children's allowances or even mothers' allowances. What is really important is not the name, but rather the nature of the impact of social and economic policies on the family, and vice versa. Social, economic, and demographic developments, such as inflation and unemployment, influence the family; in fact we can say the family reflects them. We cannot so clearly discern that the family itself affects these broad developments, that is, why family policy is important to the State.

When we remove the emotional connotations of the term 'family', we see it instead as a social institution with functions to perform. In this way it can be seen as a variable instrument, such that modifications of its functions relate to the functional necessities of the larger system. If governments confront the question of family functions they have to decide in what direction this institution is going and whether that direction is to be encouraged, arrested, or ignored. Serious consideration of family policy must therefore determine: a) the role of the family in society, b) the relationship of the family to other institutions, c) the types of social policy that might influence this relationship, and d) who is or might be responsible for determining family policy.

Because of the complexity of the forces affecting families, we have for this paper chosen to concentrate on one program, the development of Mother's allowances in the prairie provinces. We shall try to put forward some of the forces that have influenced the timing and form of allowances, so as to suggest the function

of allowances for the State, as well as their effect on families.

A primary consideration in approaching any family policy is population size and composition. In Canada population has been greatly affected by immigration policy. Though criteria for admission such as the numbers and characteristics of entrants may change over time, admission is always a matter of deliberate political, economic, and social policy. In the first fifteen years of this century, immigrants were needed to settle and farm the prairies. Farming ability was a more important criterion than country of origin (as long as the country was European). Settlement was essential to the consolidation of the west, to preserve a fragile new nation from internal revolt and from external (U.S.) dominance, as well as to provide a major export commodity. More recently, it is obvious that the growth and nature of Alberta's population are directly due to the development of the petrochemical industry. The primary objective of population policy has been the creation of a work force appropriate to political and economic objectives. In the furtherance of this policy, governments may be seen as promoting the interests of capital.

The family in Canada reflects the impact of Canadian policies and Canadian necessities, but changes in family size and function correspond to similar changes in other capitalist countries, thus suggesting a common root in the political and economic forces that shape policy. But while families reflect policies, there has been little overt support of the family as such, or concern for the "fallout" of economic policy in terms of family disruption and failure.

THE SETTING FOR POLICY INNOVATION

Some of the basic social institutions - the forms of government, the legal systems and the churches - were already in place by the time of confederation. But the nation lacked capital and people. The next forty years saw a consolidation of the existing institutions, but no dramatic confirmation or expansion of nationhood. The provision of skeletal rail links between central Canada and British Columbia brought an opportunity to assert nationhood, but more importantly to exploit the agricultural potential of the Prairies. People, preferably

farmers, were needed, and massive immigration was the population policy chosen by the federal government to meet this objective.

The Dominion Lands Act was first enacted in 1872, and though subsequently amended, not changed in principle. But it was not until the first two decades of the twentieth century, that large numbers of immigrants were attracted. During these years the growth of the prairies provinces in particular was spectacular. To begin with the basic infrastructure of government was not yet fully in place. The provinces of Saskatchewan and Alberta were established in 1905, and began the task of assimilating their rapidly growing populations.

Even prior to 1905 the education services of the North West Territories had seen one of their primary tasks as being the inculcation of Canadian values in people of different cultures and languages.[4] But if the education system became the major socializing agent for the young, it was the workplace which provided a kind of school of life for the adult population. Immigration and land settlement policies brought new Canadians automatically into contact with government, and this contact continued until free land was redeemed through cultivation, options to purchase more land were taken up, and British citizenship was acquired.[5]

But hard work was not enough. A modicum of personal capital was also needed. The cultivation of virgin land and the sale of grain brought the new farmers into close contact with the economic system. Capital could be borrowed, but the vagaries of weather, transportation systems and volatile markets, all left small farmers vulnerable to foreclosure and loss of land and property.[6]

The years of prosperity and good weather prior to the First World War were followed by drought, rising prices and economic uncertainity. As world demand for grain grew during the war, so a lack of labour developed, as men and youths enlisted in the armed forces.[7] The economic importance of women, whether at home, on the farm or in the workplace, became obvious, perhaps for the first time.[8]

The First World War presented an opportunity for women, especially middle class women, to exert their influence on public affairs in ways not previously open to them. Causes long supported by women suddenly became politically feasible. After 15 years of Conservative power, a new Liberal government was

elected in Manitoba after running on a platform of popular social issues. In its first year of office it responded to its vocal female supporters by introducing prohibition, compulsory education, the female franchise and mothers' penions.[9]

These political concessions to women's interests were repeated on a piecemeal basis elsewhere at the provincial and federal levels. At the federal level the Prime Minister, Robert Borden resisted full female emancipation until the war was almost over.[10] However at the provincial level, Manitoba's introduction of prohibition and the female franchise was soon followed by other provinces, especially in the west. Mothers' pensions were initiated in Saskatchewan in 1917/18, and in Alberta, Ontario and British Columbia in 1920.

All of these changes were to have long-term impacts. Mothers' allowances - in particular those introduced in one of the new Prairie provinces, Saskatchewan - are chosen for study here because they constitute a policy innovation by the State relating to and having an impact on some specific kinds of families, namely legally constituted families which have lost their male head, or have lost him either temporarily or permanently as a breadwinner. As is shown below this specification of the kind of family eligible for benefit was from the outset difficult to justify. It caused permanent problems of administration, but served to shape modern social assistance legislation, and prevented the introduction of more comprehensive and adequate forms of family income support.

In seeking a partial answer to the question why mothers' allowances were introduced when they were, we should try to identify the population towards which they were primarily directed, namely widows with children. We may ask, for example, whether there were special circumstances likely to contribute to an increase in the number of widows. Clearly there were during the First World War. In addition there were some longer term demographic influences and some special regional factors.

The rapid growth of population of the prairie provinces has already been mentioned. Whereas Canada's population grew by 34.2 per cent between 1901 and 1911, Saskatchewan grew by 439.5 per cent. In the period 1911 - 1916, Manitoba's population grew by 20.0 per cent, Saskatchewan's by 31.5 per cent, and Alberta's by 32.5 per cent. The first two or three decades of the twentieth century therefore saw rapid population formation on the prairies. The populations of these prairie provinces reflected this rapid formation. In 1916 less than half

of Alberta's population had been born in Canada; in Saskatchewan the proportion was 54 per cent and in Manitoba 60 per cent. The 1916 Census of the Prairie Provinces explained the excess of married males over married femalesin terms of the "relatively large proportion of immigrants comprised in the population."[11] But this sex difference for married and unmarried persisted for several decades and went beyond what might be viewed as an ordinary demographic occurrence. The difference became visible in the excess of men over women drawing old age pensions for the first time in the late 1920s. The prime working age group of men aged 15-44 in Saskatchewan exceeded women by 45.3 thousand in 1921, but dropped dramatically to 39.4 thousand in 1931, and 17.6 thousand in 1941. It is against this background of relatively good odds for marriage or remarriage that perhaps the proportion of widows potentially eligible for mothers' allowances may be viewed.

If we keep in mind the eligibility requirement in Saskatchewan and elsewhere for mothers' allowance, i.e. children under 16, (under 14 in Ontario) then by and large widows under the age of 65 would be eligible to apply if their lack of income so warranted. Widows under 65 years represented 67.9 per cent of all widows in Saskatchewan in 1911, 66.6 per cent in 1921, 57.5 per cent in 1931, and 53.1 per cent in 1941. An aging process in the general population and the growing life expectancy of women would seem to explain this decline in the proportion of younger widows. However remarriage was obviously a factor also in reducing the number of younger widows.

The proportion of widowers and widows in the total population gradually rose in the period 1871-1901, but then fell by 1911, and resumed its rise in subsequent decades. The influx of immigrants during the period 1901-1914 appears to have been responsible for temporarily reversing what in large measure was a gradual aging process in the Canadian population as a whole.

In the decade 1911-21 when the number of widows might have been expected to rise at a higher rate than that of widowers due to war deaths, in fact widowers grew at a higher rate than widows. But for both categories the rate was considerably above that for the period 1901-1911 or for 1921-31.

In Saskatchewan the sex difference ran counter to the trend in the country as a whole. There were 90.2 per cent more widows in 1921 than in 1911, and 73.8 per cent more widowers. These rates of increase were substantially more than for Canada as a whole. The rates of increase were considerably lower for the period 1921-31, but there were still proportionately more widows than widowers, and this difference grew more pronounced in the period 1931-41.

THE INTRODUCTION OF MOTHERS' ALLOWANCES

Mothers' pensions or allowances, as they were soon called, provide an example of a social policy innovation which appears to reflect the social circumstances in which it was born, but which persisted to have long-lasting significance for the development of social policy in Canada. For the purposes of the present discussion mothers' allowances afford an example of government policy focussing on the needs of particular types of family unit.

The introduction of mothers' allowances in Canada followed the first introduction of a similar provision in the State of Illinois in 1911. By 1920 40 American States had introduced this type of legislation, and in 21 of them the program was administered by the Juvenile Court.[12] In the case of Illinois the aid-to-mothers law was an amendment of the juvenile court law passed in 1899 - "Juvenile Courts - Funds to Parents; an act to amend an act entitled 'An Act relating to children who are now or may hereafter become dependent, neglected, or delinquent, to define these terms, and to provide for the treatment, control, maintenance, adoption, and guardianship of the persons of such children."

The American precedents for the Canadian mothers' allowances legislation thus place it in the context of child protection legislation generally. They indicate state intervention in an area previously reserved for charity, and in fact opposition to mothers' allowances came from the charitable sector in the United States. It is perhaps worth noting that the absence of a well developed system of charitable agencies in the prairie provinces may have been one factor in the early introduction of mothers' allowances in Manitoba and Saskatchewan.

The other major circumstance of relevance to the introduction of mothers allowances was the First World War which served to heighten, if not exacerbate a number of social issues. There was a dramatic rise in the cost of living.

The index stood at 100 in 1913, 124 in 1916, 162 in 1918 and 190 in 1920. The high cost of living and the great demand for labour led to children aged 13 to 16 years being withdrawn from school before the normal time. At the same time large numbers of 17 and 18 year old youths enlisted in the army. Women's participation in the labour force also rose.[13]

The war served to throw light on a number of social conditions not previously acknowledged. The working conditions of women and children came under scrutiny. Just over half of the 360,000 men aged 20-34 years medically examined under the Military Service Act of 1917 were more or less physically unfit.[14] Tuberculosis was a big problem during mobilization, and this disease as well as a variety of psychiatric illnesses during the demobilization process made it difficult to reintegrate servicemen into the labour force.

Social legislation in direct response to the war started in 1915 with pensions being provided for wounded and incapacitated soldiers and for their widows and children and their widowed mothers. The full impact of death and injury alone was considerable, with some 56,600 dead and 150,000 wounded soldiers. By March 1919 66,800 war pensions had been awarded, and of these 16,500 went to dependents. By March 1921 these numbers had grown to 118,000 and 23,000 respectively. A variety of other social measures were introduced for the reestablishment of discharged soldiers. In November 1918 Canada was faced with the reabsorption of 350,000 men into industry.[15] During this process relief in cash (in 1919/20) and in kind (1920/21) were provided through the Canadian Patriotic Fund.

Mothers' allowances were thus introduced in Canada during years of acute social and economic turmoil. In most provinces they followed the earlier introduction of child protection legislation. They were in this respect designed to prevent the separation of children from their families due to reasons of poverty. They were in all cases predicated, and in fact calculated, on the number of children in a family. However no set rate of allowances was given in Manitoba, Saskatchewan and Alberta, "the aim of payments being as far as possible to make up the difference between the income and the ordinary expenditure of a family."[16] In Ontario the rates were lower in towns than in cities and lower again in villages and rural areas, and limited to $5.00 per month per child in families of more than 5 children. In British Columbia deductions could be made where a beneficiary owned her own home or lived rent free.

Prior to the introduction of the Ontario Mothers' Allowance Act in 1920, a committee of enquiry established that there were 16,048 widows with 31,223 children in the province. Of these 7,500 widows with 22,289 children might be eligible for an allowance. Labour representatives urged that deserted, divorced and unmarried mothers should be included in the provisions of the legislation, but instead the regulations specified that the father must have been a British subject and the mother a British subject before marriage, and there should be two or more children under the age of 14. Not until 1933 did the number of families in receipt of mothers' allowances in Ontario exceed 7,500. At its introduction the Ontario measure was seen as a piece of labour legislation.[17]

In British Columbia, also, a commission after holding a number of public hearings recommended that divorced and unmarried mothers should be included in the provisions of the 1920 Mothers Pension Act; again they were excluded. Nevertheless applications for the new pension were said to be pouring in within months of the legislation being passed.[18]

In Saskatchewan slightly different, but perhaps equally valid, objections to those made in Ontario and British Columbia were voiced during what was otherwise a harmonious debate on the introduction of the Mothers' Pensions Act.

"M.L. Leitch, Morse, stated that the resolution only made provision for pensions for widows with children. He thought there was another class which needed consideration, the woman whose husband was still alive and who in order to look after her children properly slaved day and night in their interest.

Mr. Turgeon said there were those who were in the class outlined by Mr. Leitch. The disposition of such cases, however, was provided for in the municipal acts. The municipal authorities were the parties to look after such cases."[19]

The confusion of aims surrounding the new mothers' allowances program is nicely illustrated in the Canada Year Book 1925 which contains the following unattributed quotations.

" . . . it is not desired that applicants be considered as applying for charity; but that the mother be regarded as an employee of the State, receiving remuneration for services rendered in the proper care of her children. The mother, as an employee of the Government, must not only satisfy them of her fitness to receive an allowance, but also that she is fulfilling the trust which is being placed in her." [20]

We see then three views of mothers allowances (1) a child protection measure (2) a (protection of) labour measure and (3) mothers as employees of the state - the allowances being perhaps best described as a social wage. Yet the allowances never seem to have been designed or intended except possibly in British Columbia to provide an adequate level of income notwithstanding the requirement that need be demonstrated by the applicant having at least two children (usually under the age of 16) or an incapacitated husband and at least one child. In addition the applicant had to establish residence and the status of a British subject.

The Canadian Annual Review of Public Affairs for 1916 catches something of the conflicting forces surrounding the role of women. The "exalted duties of motherhood" identified by Cardinal Gibbons[21] can be contrasted with the evangelical fervour of a Nellie McClung.

"Despite the war, really helped by the war, the work of Woman Suffrage advocates went on in 1916 and triumphed in Manitoba, Alberta and Saskatchewan. Its influence, in a war connection, was very like that of Prohibition among the men - confusing the issue, distributing energies, dividing counsels. Women like Mrs. Nellie McClung were labouring earnestly for a vote when their force and eloquence could have done much to aid recruiting. The work of women in the war which proved their capacity aided the women who were agitating for the suffrage; the combined forces won much success."[22] Masculine reservations about both the cause of women and the cause of prohibition are of course discernible in this quotation. What is perhaps portended though is the idea that the times were exceptional, and that were it not for the war women would not have got the vote. The rapidity with which Canada first went dry under the prohibition laws and then went wet under the liquor control laws, all in the space of a dozen years, may suggest something of a parallel for the mothers' allowances legislation. While the latter was not rescinded, it was so tightly regulated, that concepts of child protection or a social wage were lost to sight.[23] This left as its primary function its effect in controlling women's participation in the labour force.

THE IMPACT OF MOTHERS' ALLOWANCES

If we recapitulate at this point we see that the prairie provinces were rapidly settled in the late 19th and early twentieth century as a result of deliberate government policy. Canada as a whole was at the same time extremely susceptible to world conditions, and in expanding production to meet a growing world demand for grain before and during the First World War suffered the consequences of a fall in grain prices after the war. The 1920s were difficult years economically, and were followed by a decade of almost unrelieved depression. The new population on the prairies like the flotsam on the tide were left stranded. The government measures taken to relieve hardship, of which mothers' allowances was one of the earliest and most long-lasting programs, were inadequate to meet the human need, and represented poor stewardship of human capital. In this equation population formation on the prairies is seen as the equivalent to capital formation in other economic and industrial contexts. Not only were government measures niggardly, they left prairie residents a prey to financial institutions, who in effect dispossessed many settlers, who had previously been brought to the prairies by the Canadian Government.[24] The history of mothers' allowances is important because they provided the precedent for the income assistance programmes of the period after the Second World War. Many of the values that underlay the administration of mothers' allowances including the market orientation reflected in the application of the principle of "less eligibility" even to these mothers with dependent children have persisted in our modern assistance programmes.

It is extremely difficult to get any satisfactory measure of adequacy for mothers' allowances, since with the possible exception of British Columbia as mentioned above no province made any attempt to provide a basic subsistence income to recipient families through these programs. There were in fact substantial differences in the rates paid in different provinces. (See Table 1). There are a number of indices of wholesale prices, of rates of wages, of average yearly earnings, and of the cost of living which cover the period from the First World War to the Second World War, and against which the amounts paid for mothers' allowances may be measured. These indices all show the period of rapid inflation during the First World War and until 1920, and then the sharp fall in 1921 towards a lower but relatively stable level until 1930, the subsequent sharp fall until the mid 1930s and the slow rise in the late 1930s.

Average wage levels provide perhaps the best tangible indicator by which to explain and judge the adequacy of mothers' allowance payments. One measure of continuing poverty might for example be if these allowances fall below 50 per cent of the average wage level. It is true that recipients might have other sources of income, but the intention in most provinces never seems to have been related to total sufficiency of income. One exception may have been Manitoba about which Saskatchewan's Commissioner of Child Protection made the following wistful comment in his 1935/36 Annual Report.

"The ideal system would seem to be along the lines in operation in Manitoba, where they have what is called the budget system. There the cost of living for the family is worked out, any income deducted, and an allowance is granted for the balance. Thus it is attempted to give a widow an amount adequate to support her according to the cost of living rates worked out by the Dominion Department of Labour. By this system, of course, the widow herself obtains something for her own needs. In that respect it goes beyond a child welfare allowance. We do not pay any allowance for the mother, but a fixed allowance for children."[25] It is likely therefore that the average wage level was rarely approached by most recipients of mothers' allowances. (See Table 2). The rates paid and the regulations used were constraints which limited the capacity of mothers' allowances to move beyond the level and the role of relief payments, which assumed employability of the recipients. Yet even though they might have needed the extra help of relief many recipients of mothers' allowances preferred to make do with what they had got.

"Notwithstanding the very careful administration of this part of the child welfare work, the amount paid for the year increased a little over ten thousand dollars. While there are those who think our scale of allowances is fairly low, the recipients themselves seem to invariably prefer the allowance to ordinary relief. In the cities some of the recipients obtain partial relief in addition to the allowance and are given a small exemption on the allowance so that they are better off financially than if they depended upon the relief allowance alone."[26]

As the depression deepened and savings were used up the number of applicants for the mothers' allowance increased. Older children were not eligible, but with no jobs available they were often also dependent on the limited family income derived partly or wholly from mothers' allowances paid for younger brothers and sisters.

In the period 1931-1941 more women sought paid employment, and their participation in the labour force increased proportionately. In Saskatchewan this represented an increase of 5,000 women workers from 37,500 to 42,800.[27] This increase in paid work by women may have offset some of the problems of poverty, but its contribution is likely to have been marginal due to the low pay attaching to jobs for women.

The straitjacket in which mothers' allowances operated may be illustrated by the small increase in expenditures during the 1930s compared with the dramatic growth of relief expenditures. (See Table 6). The growth of relief was made possible in part by federal relief legislation introduced in 1930, and reintroduced on an annual basis until March, 1941 when federal contributions to the provinces were discontinued. At this point the cost of mothers' allowances again exceeded that of relief payments as they had done in the 1920s. Mothers' allowance programmes continued during and after the Second World War. Quebec introduced its mothers' allowances programme in 1939, New Brunswick in 1944, and Newfoundland in 1951.

Thus a social program first introduced during the special circumstances of the First World War was adopted by all provinces except Prince Edward Island. Mothers' allowances were of undoubted value to recipients during the worst days of the depression, but were never expanded so as to assume the major role of social support which might have been possible. Federal contributions for relief could have been diverted into a program of family and individual support payments. Instead federal relief legislation was reintroduced annually during the 1930s. Federal contributions were seen as exceptional and temporary by both the federal and provincial governments.

The statements of the Canadian Council on Child and Family Welfare (later the Canadian Welfare Council) under its Executive Director, Charlotte Whitton, bear close examination for the council's attitude towards relief and mothers' allowances. The restricted role of the program was obviously approved.

"At the present time over $15,200,000 per annum is being expended for the care of 14,000 mothers and 40,000 children under this legislation. It is one of the measures, however, in which sound and safe principles of administration and extension are endangered through uninformed popular demand for its application to groups, who would be more effectively served by other and different measures of social aid."[28]

A few years later however the Canadian Welfare Council was reporting the field of social assistance to be "in such a formative condition as to border upon chaos in many communities and even provinces in the Dominion today. This is a condition which has been inexpressibly aggravated by the large scale provision of public unemployment relief since 1930 - but the problem antedates this development."[29]

The degree of organizational confusion in the country is reflected by the contradictory statements appearing in the Canadian Welfare Council's reports. The 1935 Annual Report recognized the similarity of principle in different assistance programmes.

"Surely progress to national well-being in our social assistance involves recognition of the fact that these three major forms of social relief (italic in original), - direct unemployment relief, old age allowances, and mothers' allowances - are all closely related in principle, all charges against the community; all susceptible to the same humane considerations in plan and administration; all, logically, primarily the concern of the unit of government constitutionally responsible for their effective provision, and that is the provincial."[30]

Such humane considerations did not prevent the staff of the Council undertaking "a complete inquiry" into the system and administration of mothers allowances in British Columbia at the request of the government during 1931, which effectively led to a sharp reduction in the previously relatively generous rates of mothers' allowances in the province. From 1933 municipalities assumed a share of the cost, and overall expenditures fell. The province resumed full responsibility in 1938, and expenditures rose.

"British Columbia's expenditures and provisions were long regarded as difficult to justify from the point of view of the actual need of many of the beneficiaries as well as from that of the province's resources. Marked adjustments, inevitably unpopular, have followed on the adoption of reorganization, suggested by the Council, by British Columbia in the past year."[31]

The council felt that the mothers' allowances programs in the six provinces that had them during the early 1930s "have stood up very effectively under a strain of unanticipated severity."[32] At the same time four of the six, the far western provinces, had reduced their rates of payment.

" . . . with least hardship in Manitoba, where the budget and schedule system always in force has allowed automatic adjustments with the downward movement in the cost of living. In Saskatchewan the allowance has always differed from that of the other provinces in that it has been a grant in aid only, and further reductions in the past year have created a situation in which the great number of the beneficiaries quite obviously require supplementary relief from other sources."[33]

In fact despite its lower rates of payment, Saskatchewan was serving twice as many families and children as Manitoba throughout the 1930s. Although there is every indication from Saskatchewan Bureau of Child Protection annual reports that mothers' allowances were tightly administered, Manitoba's budget system may have proved to be a more effective rationing mechanism.

The sanguine views of the Canadian Council on Child and Family Welfare were not shared by the authors forming the Research Committee of the League for Social Reconstruction. Viewing the period immediately prior to the depression, they came to the conclusion in their 1935 report that "a majority of Canadian families were, in the year 1930, and from all indications in the year 1929, living below the bare standard of decent livelihood."[34]

These authors calculated that an income of between $1,200 and $1,500 was needed to afford a "minimum standard of decency." They recommended

"The present provincial systems of mothers' pensions should be superseded by a national scheme of widows' and orphans' insurance, under which the widow or dependent child of an insured worker would be entitled to pensions irrespective of their means."[35]

Marsh, writing in 1943, noted the wide disparity in the rates of mothers' allowance payments, and contrasted them unfavourably with the allowances paid to the family of a soldier through the Dependents' Allowance Board, which of course had had their genesis at the same time as the first provincial mothers' allowance schemes during the First World War.[36]

Marsh saw children's allowances as a partial remedy for some of the problems raised by family poverty. He pointed out that after the implementation of the United States Social Security Act in 1935, the structure of mothers' allowance programs soon began to disappear.[37] However no such radical change was to occur in Canada. Family allowances, when finally introduced, again did not address directly the question of income adequacy. The implementation of family allowances in 1945 provides a logical termination to this discussion of what constituted a first essay by government in the area of family policy. Mothers' allowances were continued during the post-war period, and were effectively merged with other social assistance programs by the time the Canada Assistance Plan was implemented in 1966. Many of the principles of administration though have remained the same. Other categorical programs such as those for the old, the blind and the disabled might raise similar questions. We are now in an era when universality in social programs is under attack. Past experience of selectivity in the form of categorical programs does not provide any assurance that the poor and disadvantaged actually benefit from programs specifically targetted towards them. Selectivity may be viewed rather as a rationing device, pure and simple, and it is even presented as such by its proponents such as the Progressive Conservative government and the modern version of Whitton's Council on Child and Family Welfare, the Canadian Council on Social Development.[38]

If the thesis can be maintained that mothers' allowances were the true precursor and even progenitor of present day social assistance programs, it is likely that official attitudes towards the family have remained the same. Family allowances introduced under similar wartime influences to the first mothers' allowance programs, have never been developed in such a way as to have a major impact on family income. Even with a substantial increase in 1974, total family allowance expenditures were only restored to the proportion of the Gross National Product prevailing twenty years earlier.[39]

What we have had since the First World War is a major sub-stratum of families dependent on means/needs/income tested programs. The mothers' allowances programs provide the evidence that the core of welfare recipients have always been women with children and/or incapacitated husbands. These programs have always been stringently administered. Stigma has always attached to recipients of benefits. There is little evidence of entitlement or a social wage. Rather deterrence or the explicit control of the labour force is involved. When attempts have been made to mitigate the consequences of unemployment, the same criticism has been directed against unemployment insurance as against social assistance.

What has been achieved by mothers' allowance programs and their successors? The programs provided financial help on a systematic basis to specific categories of poor people. Their adequacy varied but in no case did programs approach average earned income levels. They did not therefore eliminate poverty; they mitigated some of its worst effects. They did not in any real sense reduce material inequality in Canada. They were in some respects a consequence of economic and related population growth. The amounts spent on relief and mothers' allowances were not a major stimulus to economic activity.

The administration of mothers' allowance programs contributed in a major way to the development of provincial and some municipal social service departments. Tight control on the programs prevented a major response being made to the poverty caused by the depression. But mothers' allowances were not discontinued even when relief programs were at their most important during the depression. The mothers'allowance programs may themselves have been a way of regulating demand for relief; they always met part of the financial need of eligible families, and this may have been enough even in Saskatchewan, the lowest paying of the provinces, to deter recipients from applying for relief.

The ideological supports for the original mothers' allowance programs, particularly the women's suffrage movement, quickly disappeared after women gained the vote, and after women's role, so important, during the First World War, was reduced in peace-time conditions. Even so support for widows did not extend to unmarried mothers, the divorced and the separated.

Mothers'allowances were however seen as a way of preventing some children coming into care. The distinction made between poverty and neglect was not always sustainable. The annual report of the Toronto Children's Aid Society for 1930/31 discussed the problem of increased referrals caused by worsening economic conditions.

"The Society strenuously refuses to have children made wards because of poverty alone, but it is quite apparent that the demoralizing effects of unemployment and underemployment create or aggravate ills which in turn require the major operations."[40]

The report went on to complain of the lack of resources experienced by family agencies in the past. The economic crisis had paradoxically brought some relief of the problem.

"The increase in staff of civic welfare departments in different cities and the placing at their disposal and at that of the private agencies of more funds for family relief have made possible the economy of considerable expenditures on such families in which neglect problems exist, in order to avoid, if possible, the necessity of the Society removing the children from the home." [41]

What was possible in large cities was not so possible in rural provinces like Saskatchewan. Lack of staff and resources appears responsible for the number of children in care falling by half between 1925 and 1935, and this at a time when the child population of the province reached a peak in 1931. The number of children admitted to care who lacked one parent fell dramatically from 649 (359 father living, 290 mother living) in 1927 to 172 (90 father living, 82 mother living) in 1936/37. The number of illegitimate children admitted to care reached a peak in 1930/31 and then declined until 1938/39. Fewer orphans also were admitted to care during the same period. An active policy of resisting referrals was enunciated.

"We try to differentiate between poverty and neglect and hold responsible local communities to adjust matters if possible . . . we are still being approached by the uninformed to take children into "the home" . . . we, like all child caring agencies working up to the approved standards, avoid falling into the error of trying to assist children in their own homes or relieving parents of their responsibility for sentimental reasons. We must be hard-headed as to why we do it." [42]

The major role of mothers' allowances in keeping families together was readily acknowledged in the Saskatchewan Commissioner of Child Welfare's Annual Report for 1930/31. The inability to help widowed fathers in a similar way was deplored. The policy of local community responsibility for poor families was also proving more difficult to sustain.[43]

Social commentators of the 1920s and 1930s recognized that the state was assuming new and far-reaching responsibilities. Writing in 1935 Charlotte Whitton recognized the "tremendous future significance" of the federal government's offer of relief to municipal authorities in late 1920. Such relief was given for the next four years and again in 1926/27.[44] This federal precedent was of course followed by the same type of action throughout the 1930s. Whitton also felt that there was "a quite definite movement towards complete assumption by the public authority of responsibility for all the families for whom it is providing material relief, and a similar assumption of liability for complete care by the private agency for the obviously much smaller group for whom it will care."[45]

The idea of public responsibility for disadvantaged people was therefore seen as being new, perhaps radical, but not unacceptable. Mothers' allowances were explained as follows in Saskatchewan in 1935/36.

"Ever since the public has assumed responsibility for dependent children there has always been a demand for assistance to widows left without means of support."[46]

CONCLUSION

Mothers' allowances in Canada originated when a number of long term trends converged at a time of unprecedented social, economic and political crisis for the state. There was unpredented growth of population due to massive immigration, especially of farmers or people interested in farming, encouraged by the federal government. As a result a large proportion of the population on the prairies was new immigrants barely established when the First World War started. The war itself led to disruption of the economy and of personal lives. It led to short-term prosperity, but sharply rising prices. It led to the deaths of

120,000 Canadians and the handicapping of many more. It enhanced the economic importance of women's labour, but posed major problems of resettlement for returning soldiers. It raised serious questions about the health of the general population, and reinforced earlier concerns about the welfare of children, concerns partly altruistic, but partly, economic since young people like women were seen to be an important (future) part of the work-force. The war finally afforded an opportunity for the proponents of female emancipation and of prohibition to combine and force concessions from the state.

It is the partial or piecemeal nature of some of these changes or concessions which is important. Even female emancipation did not lead in any immediate way to a significant improvement in the lot of women in Canadian society. The effects of prohibition were even more short-lived. It remains the case that Canadian governments faced a volatile electorate in the period during and after the First World War. There was some serious unrest.

Mothers' allowances represent part of the response made by governments to the pressures of the day. They were a concession to popular sentiment, symbolic rather than substantial. They offered support to civil widows, a counterpart to the support made for military widows. They offered support to children in some families in need, but not to all children in all families in need. Their partial nature was clearly recognized at their introduction. They served to keep some children in families when otherwise they might have become a charge on the state. Mothers' allowances were thus a convenient remedy for a number of problems facing government. But they were not intended to be a solution for major social ills.

Mothers' allowances thus pro.ide an interesting case study of the implications of family policy. They illustrate some of the choices made by government when confronted by particular social problems. They represented symbolic support for the family in its task of raising children, but limited the extent of financial liability. They provided support for "deserving" conventional family units, but not for unconventional or irregular family units. "Unworthy mothers must not be assisted. State aid to children should be continued only as long as the state is receiving returns in children properly trained for future citizenship." [47]

In Parker's words they provided an "economy of remedies" meeting a number of the needs of the governments of the day.[48] Their continued operation for several decades within the original narrow terms of reference was partly a confirmation of continuing need, partly a reflection of the worsening economic conditions of the depression years, and partly a reflection of government inability to terminate a popular program. Finally government reluctance to expand the terms of reference of the program served to perpetuate the Poor Law values of lesser eligibility underlying social assistance programs to this day. This continuity of purpose on the part of the State suggests its success in maintaining the class divisions of a bygone era, and in avoiding truly radical change in Canadian society. Viewed in this way family policy is as much or as little as the State chooses to make it.

TABLE 1

A Comparison of Average Yearly Earnings in Canada and Mothers' Allowance Payments in 1921, 1926, 1931, 1936 and 1941 in Six Provinces

	Average Yearly Earnings	Average Annual Amount of Mothers' Allowance Paid Per Family					
	Canada	Nova Scotia	Ontario	Manitoba	Sask.	Alberta	B.C.
	$	$	$	$	$	$	$
1921	996	-	291.23	674.75	-	359.21	-
1926	999	-	359.90	487.54	290.76	346.51	525.83
1931	950	301.55	360.75	446.97	175.85	319.95	520.58
1936	896	297.86	356.45	390.26	163.87	248.17	415.15
1941	1220	342.58	431.58	429.53	160.11	275.53*	470.30

*Fiscal year 1940/41
Source: Canada Year Book 1938, 1939, 1942 and 1954.

TABLE 2

Average Annual Amount of Mothers' Allowance Paid in Six Provinces as Percentage of National Average Yearly Earnings in 1921, 1926, 1931, 1936 and 1941

	Nova Scotia	Ontario	Manitoba	Sask.	Alberta	B.C.
1921	-	29.2	67.7	-	36.1	-
1926	-	36.0	48.8	29.1	34.7	52.6
1931	31.7	38.0	47.0	18.5	33.7	54.8
1936	33.1	39.8	43.6	18.3	27.7	46.3
1941	28.1	35.4	35.2	13.1	22.6	38.5

Source: Canada Year Book 1938, 1939, 1942 and 1954.

TABLE 3

Relief Expenditures and Mothers' Allowances Payments in Canada, 1929-1942
($ millions)

	Relief Expenditures Provinces	Municipalities	Total	Mothers' Allowances Payments
1929	1	-	1	5
1930	3	1	4	5
1931	21	5	26	5
1932	38	12	50	5
1933	57	17	74	5
1934	82	22	104	5
1935	79	21	100	6
1936	71	20	91	7
1937	70	13	83	8
1938	58	14	72	9
1939	57	10	67	10
1940	30	6	36	10
1941	15	3	18	9
1942	7	1	8	9

Source: M.C. Urquhart (ed.) Historical Statistics of Canada Cambridge: At the University Press, Toronto: The Macmillan Company of Canada Limited 1965, p. 93.

REFERENCES

1. Bruce Rawson, "The Federal Government and Family Policy" in Conference on Family Policy Proceedings, The Canadian Council on Social Development, Ottawa, 1977, pp. 77-86.

2. Hugh Heclo, "Frontiers of Social Policy in Europe and America" Policy Sciences 6,4 (December 1976) pp. 403-421.

3. Bruce Rawson, Ibid, p. 77.

4. "The Challenge of Immigration" Report of the Superintendent of Education, N.W.T. for 1898 in Alison L. Prentice and Susan E. Houston (eds.), Family, School and Society in Nineteenth Century Canada, Oxford University Press, Toronto, 1975, pp. 214-218.

5. Robert Craig Brown and Ramsay Cook, Canada 1896-1921, A Nation Transformed, McClelland and Stewart, Toronto, 1974 (Reprinted in paperback 1976, 1978), p. 56.

6. Barry Broadfoot, The Pioneer Years 1895-1895, Memories of Settlers Who Opened the West, Paperjacks, a division of General Publishing Co. Limited, Don Mills, Ontario, 1978, pp. 60-61.

7. Canada Year Book 1920, p. 2.

8. John Herd Thompson, The Harvests of War, p. 113.

9. J. Castell Hopkins, The Canadian Annual Review of Public Affairs 1916, The Annual Review Publishing Co. Limited, Toronto, 1917, p. 656.

10. John Herd Thompson, The Harvests of War: The Prairie West, 1914-1918, McClelland and Stewart, Toronto, 1978, p. 112.

11. Census of Prairie Provinces 1916, p. XXV.

12. Edith Abbott and Sophonisba P. Breckinridge, The Administration of the Aid-To-Mothers Law In Illinois, Government Printing Office, Washington, 1921, p. 5, reprinted in The Family and Social Service in the 1920s: Two Documents, Arno Press and The New York Times, New York, 1972.

13. Canada Year Book 1920, King's Printer, Ottawa, 1920, p. 2.

14. Canada Year Book 1920, p. 45.

15. Canada Year Book 1920, p. 22 and p. 38.

16 Canada Year Book 1925, King's Printer, Ottawa, p. 936.

17. J. Castell Hopkins, The Canadian Annual Review of Public Affairs 1920, The Annual Review Publishing Co. Limited, Toronto, 1921, p. 538.

18. J. Castell Hopkins, Ibid, p. 818.

19. The Morning Leader, November 28, 1917 "Paying Pensions to Indigent Mothers Heartily Approved: Measure Introduced by Attorney General Is Endorsed by Speakers on Both Sides."

20. Canada Year Book 1925, p. 935.

21. J. Castell Hopkins, The Canadian Annual Review of Public Affairs 1916, The Annual Review Publishing Company Limited, Toronto, 1917, p. 48.

22. J. Castell Hopkins, Ibid, p. 427.

23. Reginald E. Hose, Prohibition or Control: Canada's Experience With The Liquor Problem 1921-1927, Longmans, Green & Company, New York, 1928.

24. Barry Broadfoot, Ten Lost Years 1929-1939: Memories of Canadians Who Survived the Depression, Paperjacks: A division of General Publishing Company Limited, Don Mills, Ontario, 1975. Broadfoot chronicles much incidental information about the operation of relief programs during the Depression.

25. Saskatchewan, Annual Report of the Bureau of Child Protection of the Province of Saskatchewan, including the Old Age Pensions Branch for the Fiscal Year 1935/36, King's Printer, Regina, 1937, p. 13.

26. Saskatchewan, Annual Report of the Bureau of Child Protection of the Province of Saskatchewan, including the Old Age Pensions Branch for the Fiscal Year 1937/38, King's Printer, Regina, 1939, p. 10.

27. Census of Canada 1941 Vol. VII Occupations and Industries, Dominion Bureau of Statistics, Ottawa, 1946, Table 1, pp. 4-7.

28. Canadian Cavalcade: A memorandum prepared for the consideration of The Board of Governors, Canadian Council on Child and Family Welfare by the Executive Director prior to the fifteenth annual meeting, Ottawa, May 2nd, 1935, p. 27.

29. Canadian Welfare Council Annual Report 1939, p. 8.

30. Canadian Council on Child and Family Welfare Annual Report 1935, p. 12.

31. Canadian Council on Child and Family Welfare Annual Report 1932, p. 5.

32. Ibid, p. 5.

33. Ibid, p. 5.

34. The Research Committee of the League for Social Reconstruction, Social Planning for Canada, University of Toronto Press, Toronto, 1975, p. 7.

35. Ibid, p. 383.

36. Leonard Marsh, Report on Social Security for Canada 1943, University of Toronto Press, Toronto and Buffalo, 1975, p. 222. Contains a summary of main mothers' allowances provisions in 7 provinces in January 1943.

37. Leonard Marsh, Ibid, p. 225.

38. Jean Guy Carrier, Perception, November/December, 1979, p.

39. Statistics Canada, Social Security National Programs (A review for the period 1946-1975) 1976, Ottawa, 1976, pp. 246-247.

40. Quoted in The Canadian Council for Child and Family Welfare Annual Report, 1932, p. 4.

41. Ibid, p. 4.

42. Saskatchewan, Report of the Commissioner of Child Welfare and the Commissioner of Old Age Pensions for the Fiscal Year ended April 30, 1930, King's Printer, Regina, 1930, p. 7.

43. Saskatchewan, Report of the Commissioner of Child Welfare and The Commissioner of Old Age Pensions for the Fiscal Year Ended April 30, 1931, King's Printer, Regina 1931, p. 5.

44. Canadian Cavalcade, pp. 31-32.

45. Canadian Welfare Council Annual Report 1936, p. 21.

46. Saskatchewan, Annual Report 1935/36, p. 13.

47. Alberta, Sessional Papers, 1918 (vol. XIII), no. 8., p. 7, quoted in David Edgar Lyme, Welfare in Alberta, 1905-1936, M.A. Thesis Unpublished, Department of History, Edmonton, Alberta, September 21, 1966.

48. R.A. Parker, "Social Ills and Public Remedies" in William Robson (ed.), Man and The Social Sciences, Sage Publications, Beverly Hills, 1974, p. 123.